



Memorandum

The Regional
Municipality of Durham
Office of the Chief
Administrative Officer

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Chief Administrative
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Date: March 26, 2025

To: Regional Council

From: Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer

Subject: Removing the term 'swastika' from initiatives
relating to hate and hate symbols

1. Purpose:

- 1.1. This memo responds to a request from the Finance and Administration Committee to review the use of the term 'Nazi swastika' in discussions and advocacy work related to the banning of hate symbols.

The request stemmed from the "Protecting Canadian Values: Ban the Nazi Swastika in Canada" motion discussed at the February 12th Committee of the Whole meeting ([item 8.2](#)) as well as the February 26th Regional Council meeting ([item 9.5 \(4\)](#)).

Since this motion was carried, Regional Councillors and staff have received feedback about the need to remove the word 'swastika' from Durham Region's advocacy efforts as this term relates to a sacred symbol in many Eastern religions and should not be subject to a ban or connected to the Nazi hakenkreuz or hooked cross.

Staff from the CAO's office conducted research to validate feedback received and develop a consistent approach for use of this term moving forward.

2. Notable Feedback and Research Findings:

- 2.1. In his delegation for the Finance & Administration Committee's March meeting, Vijay Jain, President of the Vishwa Jain Sangathan Canada, stated:
 - 2.1.1. "Swastika is a Sanskrit word which means well-being of all" and "...using words like "Nazi swastika" is not acceptable to minority Jain, and Hindu Canadians"

2.2. In correspondence with regional staff, Arunesh Giri, President of the Hindu Canadian Association, stated:

2.2.1. "...the swastika is an integral part of every religious ceremony like Deepawali, Holi, Navratri and many more. Using the word swastika in the hate context or associating the word swastika with Nazi is depriving Hindu Canadians and Jains their religious rights."

2.3. [Bill C-229](#), known as the Banning Symbols of Hate Act, was introduced in the House of Commons in 2021 and while it has not progressed beyond the first reading, MP Peter Julian, who introduced the bill, said this legislation will refer to the word as "Nazi hooked cross" instead of "swastika" after consulting with subject matter experts.

2.4. The [Government of Victoria](#) in Australia banned the public display of the Nazi salute and other Nazi symbols in October 2023. The law makes a clear distinction between the swastika and the Nazi Hakenkreuz (hooked cross), which is banned.

3. Forward Plan:

Staff and representatives of Durham Region to replace the term Nazi swastika with Nazi hakenkreuz, Nazi hooked cross, or Nazi hate symbol when working on new initiatives, policies or calls to action related to the ban of hate symbols.